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Mandatory Review

Case # NLJ 97-398

Document # 23

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1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

23 January 1968

Dec 1 Emergency for Secretary Jellbright

NORTH KOREAN CAPTURE OF USS PUEBLO

- I. The USS Pueblo, a SIGINT ship patrolling international waters off North Korea, was seized by the North Koreans late last night Washington time.
- A. At 10 PM Eastern Standard Time last night the Pueblo encountered a North Korean patrol vessel about 15 nautical miles from the North Korean coast.
1. When challenged, the Pueblo signalled it was a US vessel on a hydrographic mission in international waters, and attempted to leave the area.
 2. The North Koreans nevertheless ordered it to heave to, opened fire and then boarded the ship. Four US crewmen were wounded, one critically.
 3. The intercepting North Korean patrol vessel, by then accompanied by three others, towed the Pueblo into Wonsan.
 4. [REDACTED]

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B. [REDACTED]

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1. [REDACTED]

2. [REDACTED]

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II. The Pueblo arrived off the North Korean coast on 10 January for a 3 1/2-week SIGINT collection operation, the first targeted against North Korea. The closest point of approach to the North Korean coast was to be 13 nautical miles (the Koreans claim territorial waters of 12 nm).

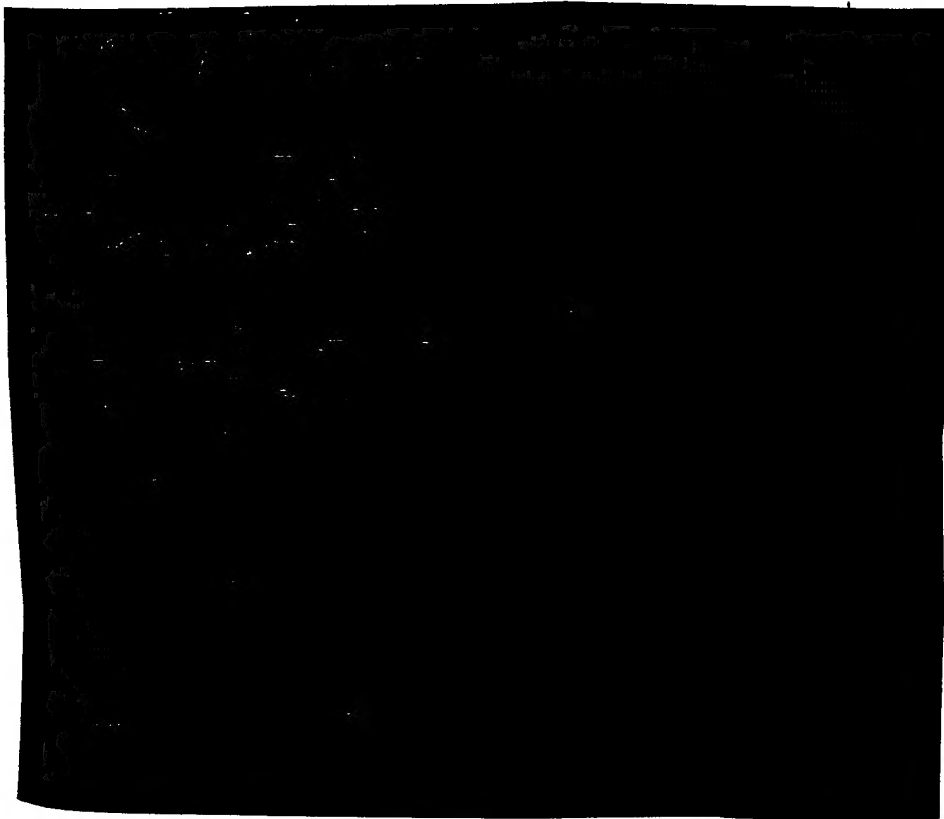
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III. This incident points up North Korea's constant concern over possible border violations--heightened in this case by direct US involvement. Pyongyang can be expected to use this incident to confirm its oft-stated claims that US "imperialists" have placed "spy boats"--until now confined to South Korean fishing vessels--off its coasts for intelligence collection and agent activity.

IV. US Counteraction

A. By 7 AM this morning US authorities had taken the following steps:

1. The nuclear carrier Enterprise, the nuclear-powered guided missile frigate Truxton, and the destroyer Collett were ordered to reverse their Vietnam-bound courses and head for waters 180 nautical miles south-southwest of Pusan, South Korea.
2. The radar picket destroyer Higbee was ordered to go from Sasebo, Japan to join the task group of the Enterprise.

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USS Pueblo Seizure Incident

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